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SUBJECT: SEOUL - MEDIA REACTION

North Korea

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"N. Korea Must Show It Is Not a Hostage-Taker"

Conservative Chosun Ilbo editorialized (04/01): "It is difficult to assess North Korea's motive in detaining and investigating foreign civilians and even seeking to put them on trial at a sensitive time when it is planning to launch a rocket and faces possible UN Security Council sanctions. North Korea should handle foreign detainees according to international norms. This would improve the North's image and allow North Korea to avoid criticism that it is seeking political gains by capitalizing on the hostage taking. President Lee Myung-bak said he intends to keep the Kaesong Industrial Complex open to maintain a window of communication with North Korea. But if the basic safety of South Korean citizens cannot even be guaranteed, the Kaesong Industrial Complex loses all rationale."

G-20 Summit

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"Political Economics of G20 Summit"

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo editorialized (04/01): "The G20 financial summit, which will be held on March 2 in London, is not likely to draw consensus from participating countries. The U.S. calls for greater budget spending for stimulating the economy while the European countries argue for revamping the financial system. Also, conflicts between the developed countries and emerging economies have surfaced. China's assertion that the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s Special Drawing Rights (SDR) should replace U.S. dollars as a key currency won support from Brazil and Russia. Participating countries differ in every issue. It seems inevitable that the G20 summit will opt for a vague compromise over a clear-cut solution. In this situation, President Lee Myung-bak sees the G20 summit as a good opportunity to enhance the ROK's status.

STEPHENNS